Unit .22

Session .01

Jesus Heals Ten Lepers

Scripture

Luke 17:11-19

11 While traveling to Jerusalem, he passed between Samaria and Galilee. **12** As he entered a village, ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance **13** and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"**14** When he saw them, he told them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And while they were going, they were cleansed. **15** But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God. **16** He fell facedown at his feet, thanking him. And he was a Samaritan. **17** Then Jesus said, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? **18** Didn't any return to give glory to God except this foreigner?" **19** And he told him, "Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you."

Intro Options

Remember, this icon means there is a Leader Pack item that goes with the lesson. See Leader Pack for additional instructions.

Main Point:
Thankfulness is the natural response to God's work in our lives.

Option 1

For several years, a beverage company ran an advertising campaign on "The Most Interesting Man in the World." The commercials would list off incredible things this man had done (e.g., his grocery lists won Pulitzer prizes).

Your students (in small groups or individually) are to come up with similar commercials, but with a different adjective. They should come up with a list of descriptors or actions of either "The Most Disgusting Man in the World" or "The Most Desperate Man in the World." Tell them they're going for humor, not for grossness. So, for example, the most disgusting man in the world might dip anchovies in barbecue sauce and eat them in bed, or the most desperate man in the world might not even have the courage to ask a clock for the time. They should try to come up with at least five descriptors.

Let them create and their share their lists. Afterward, segue into the lesson by saying that in Jesus' day, a leper might qualify for either (or both) the most disgusting or the most desperate man in the world. Lepers would be viewed as disgusting and cast out; they also would have been desperate for any human compassion, touch, or empathy. Point out that these facts make Jesus' kindness to the lepers in the story you'll read today all the more remarkable: and beautiful.

Option 2

"Ur doing it wrong" is an occasional Internet meme that pops up every now and again. It's written on pictures of people trying to do some task, but in a very wrong (or foolish) way (e.g., trying to open canned vegetables with a rock).

Inform students that they're part of a comedy vignette group (like Saturday Night Live, except maybe your group is called Wednesday Night Live). They are to create short skits of people "doing it wrong." Let them choose about five things to be the subjects of the skits: maybe something like video games, homework, taking out the trash, or other everyday tasks. Let them prepare and show their skits.

Now, have the same groups make another skit, but this time you're going to provide them with the subject: either gratitude or asking for something. They should make a skit showing the wrong way to show gratitude or to ask for something; bonus points if they then go on to show a right way to show gratitude or to ask for something.

Point out that in today's lesson we'll see nine lepers "do" gratitude wrong, but one will do it right. You can also point out that we, like the lepers, often do "asking for something" wrong: we ask for worldly things like physical healing when Jesus has far better things for us, like salvation, as he did for the tenth leper.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 17:11-13.

By this point in the Gospel narrative, Jesus was a famous man. His teaching had spread throughout Judea and beyond, and His miraculous healings had given hope to even the most hopeless. Among the hopeless were the lepers; they were some of the most desperate people in society in that day.

To be a leper was to be an outcast. Even God's law instructed the community to separate themselves from the diseased (Lev. 13:1-14:32; Num. 5:2). But it wasn't primarily the community's responsibility to ensure this separation. It was the leper's. As if the disease wasn't bad enough, they had to put self-restrictions in place to stay away from others. They wore torn clothes, let their hair grow long and uncombed, and as they came near a town or village, were required to cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" (Lev. 13:45). Lepers were self-identified social outcasts to the maximum degree. So, when Jesus came walking near this group of lepers, their hearts lifted and they cried out to Him for mercy.

The lepers did not run to Jesus as He walked their way. Instead, they stood at a distance and raised their voices. They understood their place. They understood their situation. Therefore, when they saw the One who they knew could heal them, they took advantage of His presence. They called out to him for mercy. For men as unclean as they, Jesus was their only hope.

- **How is sin spiritually comparable to leprosy?**
- **How have you experienced separation from God and from others because of your sin?**

Understanding the separation our sin creates from God is the first step. But we must walk on. Notice how the lepers took advantage of their opportunity with Jesus. They heard He could heal, so they cried out for mercy. In other words, they prayed for Jesus to intervene and help them. Every Christian's new life in Christ begins the same way: calling out to God for rescue.

Jesus came not to call those who have it all together but those who are sinful and need a savior. Jesus did not come to save the worthy but the worthless. The lepers knew their place. They understood their plight. And if you understand yours, then the Spirit is at work in you, leading you to cry out for mercy.

When you cry out in desperation like these lepers did, Jesus will be there to respond. He will turn toward you with the fullness of mercy and grace. He will save you and redeem you. He will heal you at the deepest level of your soul, but you have to call out. If you're low enough to accept His mercy, He's great enough to pour it out.

- **Have you ever called out to God for help and grace during a time of desperation? How did He respond?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Thankfulness is the natural response to God's work in our lives.

Luke 17

11. "Jesus apparently walked along the border between Samaria and Galilee, then crossed the Jordan River at the nearest point, proceeding down the eastern bank of the Jordan toward the crossing point opposite Jericho, which is the next location mentioned in the narrative (18:35)."[1]

12. Modern-day lepers are not like those in ancient times. Since 1995, the World Health Organization has been providing free medicine to treat the disease. It is, thankfully, no longer considered a public health problem.[2] But during the life of Jesus, there was no medicine. You were doomed to wait it out, to be relieved either by time or by death. Furthermore, to contract leprosy was to contract far more than merely a disease; it was to contract a whole host of social problems given that one was cut-off from society and close contact with others.

14-16. If they did not respond in obedience, the lepers would not have found healing. Healing comes on God's terms or not at all. When Jesus comes to us, His power turns us around. It gets us going. It moves us on a path we never before imagined to heal parts we never before saw.

17-19. Jesus identified this one leper for us. He called him a "foreigner," a Samaritan. That this Samaritan was living with the Jews points to the total reduction of social standing leprosy caused. The Jews and Samaritans were not on friendly terms. The Samaritans were like the unwanted stepchildren of the Jewish family. They went off and married those outside the faith. They compromised their lives by outside influence.

Though the Samaritans claimed to worship God, the Jews would not worship alongside them. They were unclean in Jewish eyes. But leprosy shattered those lines. The Samaritan and the Jew lived together in shame, at least in this instance.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 8, DDG)

Justification by Faith

Justification refers to the moment when a person is objectively declared righteous before God based on the righteousness of Christ's atoning death (Rom. 8:33-34). This act of declaration takes place through faith in Christ and not as a result of human works or effort (Eph. 2:8-9). Through justification, a person is made to be in right standing before God, changing what was once an estranged and hostile relationship to one of adoption into the family of God.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 17:14-16.

With Jesus, there is an endless road of healing He calls us to enjoy. His interaction with the lepers proved the point. As He turned to them in mercy, He gave a simple command: "Go and show yourselves to the priests." He sent them on a path of obedience, and on the way, they found the healing for which they longed.

As these men left Jesus and traveled to the priest, they knew arriving in their current state would do no good. They were still unclean. They couldn't fool the priest. But Jesus wasn't asking them to fool anyone. He was asking them to have faith and go. In other words, the lepers were healed from their disease as they responded to the word of God. So too is anyone who responds positively to the word of God. Imagine if the lepers did nothing. If they delayed obeying Jesus' word to them, they would not have found healing. Perhaps they heard of Jesus touching the leper and making him instantly clean (Luke 5:13), so obeying Jesus' command in this instance required a prolonged trust in Him to make them clean.

- **What path of obedience is Jesus calling you to walk today?**

Ten lepers found healing on the way to the priest, but only one turned around to find Jesus again. Ten lepers called out for mercy and received it, but only one thought to express his gratitude. Ten percent of those whom Jesus healed returned. What about us? How often do we return to God to show Him our thankfulness?

- **What are some things you need to thank God for right now?**

Read Luke 17:17-19.

We should not be shocked that only one leper returned. It's not that the others weren't grateful for the gift; they likely just made other plans once their lives were back on track. Moments before they cried for mercy, now they're racing home to enjoy the gifts of the Giver. Perhaps they would share the story with others. They would tell of Jesus healing them and sending them on their way. But one had a deeper story to tell. One leper returned and found more than the healing of his flesh; he found the healing of his soul.

That the Samaritan was the one to return speaks volumes on the Jewish men who never turned back. Those whose family lines were closest to God's heart took His gifts and went home, happy only to be free of their disease. The Samaritan, however, turned from his path to run back to Jesus in thanks. Of the ten, true gratitude pierced his heart only. He could not take another step without returning to the Healer to express his feelings in worship.

- **How would you describe the practice of thanksgiving in your worship to God?**

rarely, if ever — sometimes — more often than not — almost always

As the Samaritan fell before Jesus, she found the assurance of eternal salvation. We find the same as we come to Him as well. We find that whatever need God has met, there is a greater need He met before we even asked Him for it. On the cross, Jesus met a need we didn't realize we had, and by faith, we receive the salvation Jesus purchased.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Thankfulness is the natural response to God's work in our lives.

Luke 17

17-19. "What saved the man—what made him well, body and soul—was faith in Jesus Christ. He first exercised that faith when he cried out to Jesus for salvation … It was also by faith that he went back to Jesus and worshiped. This is what distinguished the man from the other nine lepers. They too were healed by faith, at least to a certain extent. But their healing only went skin deep. Only one man recognized what his healing revealed about Jesus, and therefore what implications it had for his eternal salvation. So the man returned to Jesus, and when he did, he was doing something more than simply returning thanks: he was coming to trust in Jesus. He wanted something more than physical healing: he wanted to know Jesus in a personal way. It was not simply what Jesus could do for him that he wanted, but Jesus himself, in all his grace—not just his work, but also his person. Therefore, the man joined himself to Jesus by faith … The other nine men did what Jesus said, and they wanted what Jesus could give, but they did not want to be with Jesus in a relationship of loving trust."[2]

Activity

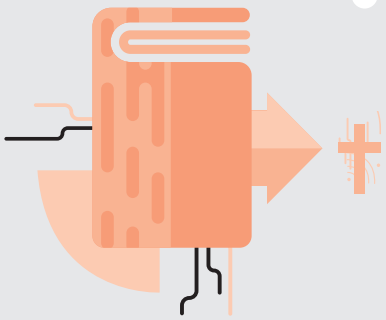
You may have heard of the Choose Your Own Adventure book series. The books are designed for lower-school-aged children; at points in the story, you are given two choices; you flip to the page of whichever choice you make, and the story proceeds from there.

Your students are going to make biblical Choose Your Own Adventure books based on tonight's lesson. I'd suggest you give them maybe six or seven sheets of paper to fold together to make their books. Students could work individually or in small groups. Stick figures are fine; we don't want this activity to take forever!

They need to take each of the main point of the lesson and put it somewhere into the story. The stories should be designed for smaller children. For example, the main point is that thankfulness is the natural response to God's work in our lives, so your story might have a child lost in the woods; the child can choose either to cry for help or to continue to try to figure it out him-or herself. Your book should show what happens for either choice (presumably, crying for help would result in a good thing, whereas not crying for help would mean the child stays lost). At another point, the reader should choose how to respond to help or healing: with gratitude or not (the main point in the lesson). Let students share their stories. If they're good, you might even consider taking them to a younger group to read together.

(p. 10, DDG) Christ Connection

When ten lepers called out to Jesus for mercy, Jesus sent them to the priests and they were healed. Jesus declared that the one leper who returned to thank and worship Him was saved by His faith. Likewise, when we cry out in faith to Jesus, He saves us from our sin, a gift that prompts a life of gratitude and worship.



JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS

Luke 17:11–19

JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS

Thankfulness is the natural response to God's work in our lives.

JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

GRATITUDE – To appreciate what someone has done for or given to us.

HEAD

When were the lepers healed?

How did the leper who returned respond to being healed by Jesus?

HEART

The leper who turned back realized that his greatest need was not for his body to be healed, but for his spirit to be healed and cleansed from sin. Jesus did both. The leper showed great gratitude to Jesus because he understood the depth of Jesus' grace toward him. Can you think of a time when you deserved to be punished but instead were given grace (something good you didn't deserve)? Did you respond with gratitude?

How often do you take the time to show gratitude to God or others? Gratitude isn't always convenient. The leper was finally free of his disease and able to have a brand new life. But he took the time to stop, worship and show gratitude to Jesus. How does this encourage you to take the time to express gratitude?

HANDS

The more we understand the depth of Jesus' mercy toward us and all He has freely given, the more our gratitude toward Him and others will grow. List three specific things Jesus has given to you. Spend time thanking Him for these things through prayer. Then, list three things that others have given to you (love, time, resources, etc.) Send a card, text or call these people and thank them for what they have done.